

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Newsletter

December 2015
104 West Main Street, Stafford Springs, Connecticut 06076

Dear Friends in Christ,

You may have noticed before an icon of the Virgin Mary in our church. Perhaps you've wondered why that's there or what it means. As we prepare to celebrate the feast of our Lord's nativity, it's appropriate to reflect on not only it's meaning but also on why in fact this image is more than just a seasonal appointment.

Beside Christ, no other individual has been painted more than the Virgin Mary. In Greek, she is called the Theotokos, which means "God-bearer," because she bore God in her womb. On either side of her she is identified by the letters MP OY, an abbreviation of the Greek words Mater Theou, which mean "Mother of God." Mary in this icon is also called "She Who Shows the Way," referencing how she points to her Son who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In Latin it has been called Sedes Sapientiae, "Throne of Wisdom," because Christ who is the Word of God and the Wisdom of God made her womb his throne and even has a child seated on her lap ruled over the universe.



She is depicted wearing a veil that would have been typical of Jewish women of her day. However coded into her dress is a symbol of her lowliness of exaltation of which the Evangelist Luke speaks. The veil is red, the color of divinity, while the clothes under her veil are blue, the color of humanity. This is opposite of how Jesus is usually depicted, wearing his humanity upon his divine, eternal nature. Mary's outer clothing being this color represents the words of the angel Gabriel, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the Power of the Most High will

overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). Her veil has three stars, a symbol of her virginity, but also a reminder of the star which came to rest over the place where the Christ-child lay.

Mary often is depicted looking at us, pointing to her Son to direct us to Him. We are reminded of her instructions at Cana, “Do whatever He tells you.” Jesus’ identity is marked by the letters IC XC, an abbreviation for “Jesus Christ” in Greek. He is also set apart by a special halo which is unique to only Him. His halo contains a cross. Within the halo are more Greek letters, “O WN,” usually translated as “I AM.” These letters remind us that Jesus Christ, even while a child in the arms of His mother, is the same God who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush and said, “I AM who I AM.”

The more we study this icon the more we see multiple things are happening in it. Mary is tenderly holding Jesus because it is into her care that the infant Son of God has been given. This is to remind us of the reality of the incarnation that in becoming a human, Christ took on our whole human experience—our weakness, our vulnerability, and cast off His independence for our sake. Luther sums this up perfectly when he describes Mary’s role, saying, “Mary made soup for God, changed God’s diapers, sheltered God from the cold, and nursed God at her breast.” There’s no mistaking that Jesus is truly human.

However the Eternal God, having taken humanity onto Himself, also embraces his mother in this image. The Son of God subjects Himself to the suffering and uncertainty of human birth in order to tenderly embrace humanity, the whole of which is here represented by our sister, Mary. The artist captures Mary’s thoughtfulness as one who “treasured all these things [she was told] and pondered them in her heart” and as one whose heart the prophet Simeon predicted would also be pierced. Mary and Jesus look very similar in the image, a reminder like the stars on her veil of Mary’s virginity. Jesus looks like his mother because He has no earthly father and thus takes all of His genetic data from his mother. This is important because it was Mary who agreed to be the mother of the Son of God, and thus it is from Mary’s flesh that a body for God is woven when she consents to take God’s Life within her.

Mary represents for us humanity that has accepted God. She is the one who “heard the Word of God and kept it” and who was open to God’s will to selflessly say, “I am the handmaiden of the Lord, let it be done unto me as you have said.” Thus Mary is the model for us Christians in how we likewise ought to be open to God’s will. This icon demonstrates for us that Mary is more than just a literary character that appears in the Gospel once a year. Mary has more value than her utility as a woman who gives birth to a child. God very intentionally chooses Mary for her humility and her openness to God’s will and because Mary trusted God and believed the wonderful thing she was told would happen, she received a great honor and was entrusted with the very care of the sleeping child who is the great I AM.

When we see this image, let us reflect on what great things God has done. Too often we get so caught up in the nostalgia of the Christmas story that we don’t think about the cosmic, earth-shaking, and awe-filling meaning. To say that Christ is born means that God has left His

throne and has taken on human flesh. That God who is all powerful, mighty and glorious, worshipped by the cherubim and seraphim without ceasing gave up all the majesty of heaven and became a baby. God became a baby. The eternal Word could not speak but only cry, worshipped not by angels but by shepherds, born in a stable with the animals, who needed to be sheltered from the cold, and fed, and cleaned. He who is Life itself took on suffering and hunger and sorrow and eventually death by taking on Mary's flesh.

And all this so that He could embrace you, hold you, and be held and cherished by you. Christ is Born. Glorify Him.

Peace and Joy to you as we prepare to celebrate this great and holy event!

Pastor Tom

Bethlehem in Prophecy and a Visitation into my Heart - By Michael Welch



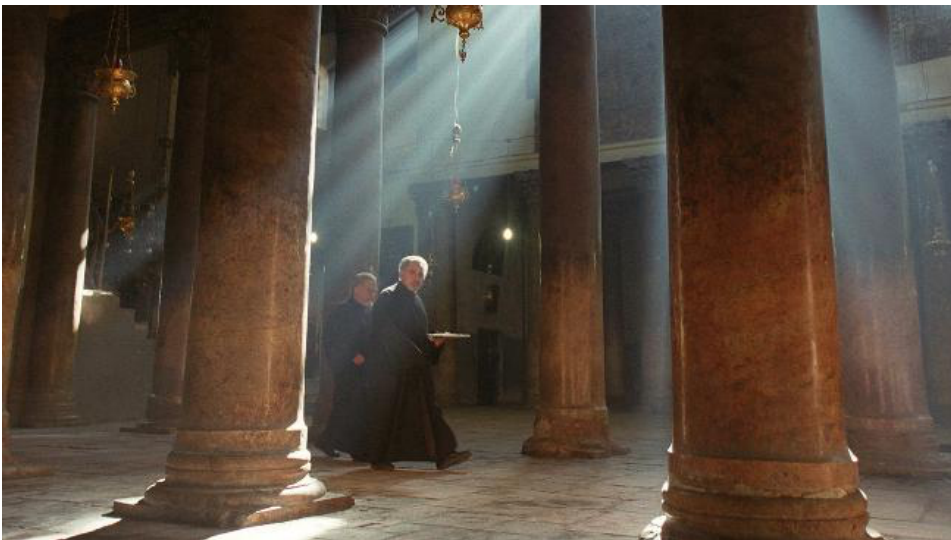
Bethlehem (Ephratah) is first mentioned in the book of Genesis when Jacob stops there so his wife Rachel can give birth to Benjamin and she dies delivering her son. Jacob buries her there and erects a pillar on her grave. This spot is well known to this day. He then moves on a little and camps near the tower of Edar. Transliteration migdal-eder, the tower of the flock.(Gen. 35) Next we move to Micah, who prophesies the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, he says “*and thou O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why dost you cry aloud? Is there no king in thee? Is thy counselor perished? For pangs have taken thee as a*

woman in travail.”(Micah 4:8) “*But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel whose going forth have been from old, from everlasting*”(Micah 5:2)

I have been blessed to have visited The Church Of the Nativity and each time I visit this traditional place of our Saviors birth I have been overcome with emotion. I say traditional because no one knows for sure where in Bethlehem He was born. The basilica has stood for almost 1,800 years and survived the ravages of time. This was a venerated place at the end of the first century, so the Emperor built a temple to Adonis upon the site, which marked its location for Queen Helena to build the Basilica. In the seventh century the Persians invaded the land and destroyed all the churches except this one. Upon entering they saw mosaics depicting three men in Persian dress worshiping a child and withdrew from the place leaving it intact. The church has survived invasion upon invasion, war upon war and held hostage by Palestinians just a few years ago for 45 days. Artifacts were destroyed and walls defecated upon.

Approaching the church from Manger Square crowds are pressing towards the entrance as vendors form blockades slowing our movement, shouting “one dollar one dollar, three for ten dollars, buy my postcards!”. Armed Palestinians with automatic rifles surveil the throng below from their perches on the roof top of the monastery to the right. Palestinian Tourist Police are half heartedly breaking up the vendor blockades so that we can pass. While the

commercialism so familiar here in the U.S. surrounds the Church of the Nativity. I am profoundly struck by the peace that envelops me upon entering this place, sanctified by the prayers and offerings of tens of millions of pilgrims who have visited before me. Their repentant prayers raising up to the LORD as incense. Their prayers have hollowed it. The entrance was lowered to prevent invaders from riding into the



church on horse back causing me to bow when entering. I immediately smell the incense of centuries illuminated by shafts of light from the rows of windows high up at the roof line. The columns that separate the quarters of the church have served as a touchstones for millions of worshippers and are impregnated with the oils from their hands, creating a golden patina upon them, reflecting a warm glow through out the church inviting me to enter into His peace. Proceeding to right of the icon clustered sanctuary, which is built above the grotto I wait patiently in the soft light of prayer candles to descend into the chapel, as chanting and



Hallelujahs spring forth in a multitude of languages, giving me goose bumps. Entering the Grotto there is a 14 pointed silver star marking the spot of our LORD's birth and strains of Silent Night ring out in the native tongues of worshippers. My spirit is quickened. Bathed in forgiveness I worship. After reflection and prayer I ascend again carrying within me an overwhelming sense of joy and hope into the world. I feel His peace within me. We exit the church into the hustle and bustle of the market place surrounding the church. Once again hearing the venders calls "one dollar one dollar, three for ten dollars and I seemed to pass thru them as though I were invisible. I board the bus back to Jerusalem. The door closes, the bus begins to move and I drift off and I awake as we reach the hotel. At dinner that night amongst the chatter and excitement of my friends I am quiet. Their voices fade into the background. I escape to a corner of the lounge, sitting in solitude, sipping a glass of wine meditating on the events of the day and how my heart had been touched. I wondered how I could possible express my experience to

others.

I retire early sleeping soundly. The next morning I am awakened to Sheila's gentle voice "rise and shine my love". I am instantly awake and revived.

What I experienced here in Bethlehem can be experienced anywhere. Jesus meets each of us in special place, in a special way, at a special time that is just right for each of us. I pray that we may reflect His love and share His story. Not just through this advent season, but through out the year, that others might see our joy. On this wonderful day of remembrance of our LORD'S birth let us take time to Savior the moment and experience His true Joy.

Click the Link below to watch Bethlehem Revisited video

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/3hykeahhlvtw46/Bethlehem%20Revisited.mov?dl=0>

Pastor

Rev. Thomas S. Drobená; ‘Pastor Tom’
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Email address: thomas.drobená@yale.edu
Mailing address:
7 Green St. Stafford Springs, CT
06076-1334
Church – htlc-church@att.net
Website – holytrinitystafford.org

Members of the Council are:

President Michael Welch
Cellphone: 860-982-3697
Email – mikeswelch49@gmail.com
Vice-President – Leonard Lichanec
Acting Treasurer – Sheila Welch
Secretary – Amelia Hinchliffe
Financial Secretary – Leigh Maxa
Andrew Fisher
Cathy Lichanec
Michael Marvonek
Patricia Marvonek



Service Teams

† Worship & Music Team: Leigh Tremblay
† Property Team: Andrew Fisher,
Michael Marvonek, Adam Tremblay and
Michael Welch
† Learning & Youth Group Team:
Rev. Thomas Drobená, Melissa Fisher, Nan
Hayden, Walter Kovaciny, Cathy & Leonard
Lichanec

Shut-in Members of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Attn: Mr. Harold Barton
Fox Hill Center
1253 Hartford Tpke. Room #49A
Vernon, CT 06066-4560

Attn: Mrs. Barbara Bulick
Brookdale
1715 Ellington Rd. Room # 212
South Windsor, CT 06074-2702

Ms. Shirley Kaba
7 High St.
Stafford Springs, CT 06076-1215

Attn: Ms. Barbara Kovaciny
Evergreen Health Care Center
205 Chestnut Hill Rd., Room # 1101
Stafford Springs, CT 06076-4005

Mr. Paul C. Kovaciny
242 East St.
Stafford Springs, CT 06076-3923

Ms. Anna Mandak
21 Old Monson Rd.
Stafford Springs, CT 06076-3343

Mrs. Tonia Marvonek
Evergreen Health Care Center
201 Chestnut Hill Rd., Rm. # 2107
Stafford Springs, CT 06076-4005

December Anniversaries

10 – Richard & Nan Hayden
30 – Phil & Janet Renn

December Birthdays

02 – Debra ‘Debbie’ Lewis
05 – Rev. Thomas S. Drobená

08 – Daniel Lichanec
09 – Jennifer Welch
17 – Paul Hockla
19 – Carl ‘Tim’ Mercier
20 – Melissa Fisher
23 – Finnegan Cooley
27 – Anna Mae Hockla
31 – Harold Barton

Holy Trinity Christmas Celebration

Thursday, December 17, 2015

6:00 pm

Join us in fellowship as we celebrate the Birth of Christ!

Dinner, photo booth, caroling, activities for all ages, and of course a very special guest will be making an appearance!

This is a free will offering event, with proceeds going to Safe Net Ministries. Please wear your Christmas colors and bring a friend.

RSVP by 12-15

Sign up at Church or Contact Jennifer Welch
email- jenn3936@hotmail.com

Text or call 860-458-9397

Christmas Caroling

All are invited to help sing Christmas Carols to our shut-ins on Sunday, December 20th starting at 1:00 p.m. Most of the shut-ins probably have a dietary restriction of some sort so the gift from church will be a 4 1/2 inch Poinsettia and a small tray of goodies for their guests. If you can make some goodies, please let us know. Let's make a mighty noise for our Lord!

Deadline for make a contribution in 2015

If you're considering making an end-of-year donation to church, the deadline for making the donation in person will be Sunday, December 27, 2015. If you're mailing the donation, give the mail service enough time

with the extra holiday mail so the envelope needs to reach church by Saturday, December 26, 2015.

Changes to the prayer list shown in the weekly bulletin

Pastor Tom wishes to know when someone is added or removed from the prayer list so he can reach out to them and follow up on them in person. To make sure Pastor Tom knows of changes to the prayer list, contact him directly. You can call Pastor on his phone or email him. Then Pastor will let the typist know of the addition/ subtraction to the list. Any person wishing to be on the prayer list can make the contact themselves or have a friend or family member make the contact for them.

Upcoming Events

😊 December 15th – deadline for submitting articles for the January 2016 newsletter

😊 January 17th – deadline for submitting reports to be included in the annual report

😊 January 24th – Annual meeting, please plan on attending so we have a quorum

The Financials

Through October 2015

Annual Budget	\$75,199
Budget to date	62,691
Regular Income	33,817.20
year to date expense	58,617.73
Net regular income	(24,800.53)
Special Donations	4,890.13 *
Net Income	(\$19,910.40)

*\$3,600 McGurn Challenge

Thank you

I want to thank all of you for the kindness you showed me during my Win's illness. Your prayers, kind words, the gentle pat on the back, all gave me strength and courage. God chose to call him home

My family and I want to say a special **THANK YOU** to Pastor Tom, Michael Welch, Leigh Maxa and Boyd Wood for the sacred and beautiful funeral service. A special Thank You also to Jennifer who prepared the delicious food.

Thank you to all of you for being there for us, sharing the grief of our loss and in the celebration of Win's Life well lived.

Ruth Boyles and Family



STAFFORD PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

We will be meeting on the **SECOND TUESDAY** of the month from **6:00-7:30 pm** at the Stafford Public Library. Our next meeting is **Tuesday, December 8, 2015.**

We welcome individuals who would like to attend and knit, crochet, or quilt these much needed prayer shawls. (We'll even teach you to knit or crochet!) Join in a ministry that brings God's grace, peace, comfort, love, joy, and hope to those in need. If you cannot make the meeting but want to make prayer shawls at home, we'll even pick them up. If you or your pastor knows of anyone who could use a prayer shawl, we'll arrange for one to be picked up. Please contact Kathy Aborn at 860-684-9484 for information or pick up arrangements.

Thanks to the Roast Beef Crew and all their hard work!!!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 <i>Pastor's Day off</i>	2	3	4	5
6 The Second Sunday of Advent 10:00 a.m. Holy Communion 11:15 a.m. Church Council (Nicholas, Bishop)	7 Ambrose, <i>Bishop & Hymn writer</i> (no service)	8 <i>Pastor's Day off</i>	9 Advent Soup and Conversation 6:30 p.m.	10	11	12 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday Camp 8:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Safe Net
13 The Third Sunday of Advent 10:00 a.m. Holy Communion Deadline for ordering Poinsettias (Lucy, Martyr)	14 John of the Cross, <i>Renewer of the Church</i>	15 <i>Pastor's Day off</i>	16	17 WIC 6:00 p.m. Christmas celebration at church	18	19
20 The Fourth Sunday of Advent 10:00 a.m. Holy Communion 1:00 p.m. Christmas Caroling (Katarina von Bora Luther, Reformer)	21	22 <i>Pastor's Day off</i>	23	24 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Holy Communion Candlelight Service	25 10:00 a.m. Nativity of our Lord Christmas Day Holy Communion	26 Stephen, <i>Deacon & Martyr</i> (no service) 8:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Safe Net
27 The First Sunday after Christmas 10:00 a.m. Holy Communion and Holy Baptism 11:15 a.m. Social Hour (John, Apostle & Evangelist)	28 Holy Innocents of Bethlehem, <i>Martyrs</i> 7:30 Vespers	29 <i>Pastors Day off</i>	30	31		

Holy Trinity - Stafford Springs

Thank you,
thank you,
and once again,
thank you.

*Thank you for sharing Pastor Tom
with us during our vacancy.*

*Your Brothers & Sisters
Holy Trinity - Trumbull*



December / January Service Schedule

With the new church season starting, the reading for the next year are from Series C. These readings are from page 18 to in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnal.

<u>Tellers</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Worships Assistants</u>	<u>Reader</u>
December 6, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. – The Second Sunday in Advent – Blue			
Malachi 3: 1-4; Psalm, Luke 1: 68-79; Philippians 1: 3-11; Luke 3: 1-6			
Stacy Fisher	Melissa Fisher	Stacy Fisher	Daniel Lichanec
Walter Kovaciny	Walter Kovaciny		
Sheila Welch			
December 13, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. – The Third Sunday in Advent – Blue			
Zephaniah 3: 14-20; Psalm, Isaiah 12: 2-6; Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 7-18			
Amelia Hinchliffe	Melissa Fisher	Stacy Fisher	Ruth Boyles
Cathy Lichanec	Cathy Lichanec		
December 20, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. – The Fourth Sunday in Advent – Blue			
Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm, Luke 1:46b-55; Hebrews 5: 1-10; Mark 10: 39-45 [46-55]			
Walter Kovaciny	Daniel Lichanec	Cathy Lichanec	Steve Marvonek
Michael Welch	Leonard Lichanec		
December 24, 2015 – 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service – White			
Isaiah 9: 2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1 – 14 [15 – 20]			
	Walter Kovaciny	A Volunteer	
	A Volunteer		
December 25, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. – Christmas Day – White			
Isaiah 62: 6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3: 4-7; Luke 2: [1-7] 8-20			
	Walter Kovaciny	A Volunteer	
	A Volunteer		
December 27, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. – The First Sunday of Christmas - White			
1 Samuel 2: 18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3: 12-17; Luke 2: 41-52			
Cathy Lichanec	Melissa Fisher	Cathy Lichanec	Daniel Lichanec
Leonard Lichanec	Walter Kovaciny		
January 3, 2016 – 10:00 a.m. – The Second Sunday of Christmas – White			
Jeremiah 31: 7-14; Psalm 147: 12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14 John 1: [1-9] 10-18			
Cathy Lichanec	Walter Kovaciny	Michael Welch	Daniel Lichanec
Leonard Lichanec	Sheila Welch		

December – Leigh Maxa

Christmas Poinsettias

The members and friends of Holy Trinity are encouraged to donate poinsettias each Christmas in order to give Glory to God and beautify our sanctuary during the Nativity liturgies. Those who donate the poinsettias may take them after the 10:00 a.m. liturgy on Christmas Day, December 25th. The cost of each poinsettia is \$6.50.

Your Name: _____

Given in honor of (for the living) _____

OR

Given in memory of (for the dead) _____

Return this form to Walter Kovaciny with the correct payment, by Sunday, December 13th. If paying by check, it should be payable to the: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Please indicate what color and quantity poinsettia(s) you would like, red ____ or white ____.

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*** Coming Events ***

December

- 6 – Council meeting – 11:15 a.m.
- 9 – Advent Soup and Conversation – 6:30 p.m.
- 12 – Saturday Camp – 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- 12 & 26 – Safe Net – 8:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.
- 13 – Deadline for ordering Poinsettias
- 17 – Christmas celebration at church – 6:00 p.m.
- 20 – Christmas Caroling – 1:00 p.m.
- 24 – Christmas Eve, Holy Communion and Candlelight Service – 7:30 p.m.
- 25 – Nativity of our Lord, Christmas Day, Holy Communion service – 10:00 a.m.
- 27 – Baptism and Social Hour – 11:15 a.m.
- 28 – **Holy Innocents of Bethlehem**, *Martyrs*, vespers – 7:30 p.m.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church 104 West Main St. Stafford Springs, CT 06076

Web site address www.holytrinitystafford.org

Address Correction Requested Slovak Zion Synod – ELCA

